AAI PAT INTRODUCES THE ACQUISITION DESKBOOK

Automated Acquisition Information Process Action Team Wraps Up Session at DSMC

Frances M. Valore

On April 17, 1995, the Automated Acquisition Information (AAI) Process Action Team (PAT) briefed Dr. Paul G. Kaminski, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology (USD[A&T]), and the Service Acquisition Executives (SAE) on their recommendations to develop a DoD Acquisition Deskbook and Automated Program Status Reporting system. Dr. Kaminski and the SAEs unanimously endorsed both recommendations.[1]

The Beginning

In early January, under the sponsorship of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition Reform, representatives from the Air Force and Navy briefed Dr. Kaminski and the SAEs on two ongoing efforts designed to improve the effectiveness of our acquisition workforce — the Air Force Acquisition Model (AFAM) and the Joint Acquisition Management System. Discussion among the Acquisition Executives (AE) quickly expanded beyond the two specific programs, focusing instead on the broader need to apply automated information technology to the Department's acquisition processes. As an outcome of

this meeting, Dr. Kaminski chartered the AAI PAT to "define a vision and build a roadmap to institutionalize an automated acquisition information process to provide current and comprehensive information...to effectively and efficiently buy weapon systems." One week later, beginning 17 January, the AAI PAT convened at the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC).

Vision and Goals

The AAI PAT began with a decidedly program management and weapon systems orientation, but as the opportunities for application of automated acquisition information technology became apparent, the team expanded their focus to include the entire acquisition workforce (e.g., personnel involved in procurement; logistics; program management; sci-

Ms. Valore is the Associate Dean of Information, Research, Consulting and Information Division, DSMC.

ence and technology; engineering; finance). We settled on the following vision:

Institutionalize an automated acquisition information process to provide current, appropriate and meaningful information and tools for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Services, Defense Agencies and Acquisition Managers to effectively and efficiently acquire products, systems and services.

To realize this vision, four specific end-state descriptions or outcome goals were developed.

Goal 1: An automated acquisition information process will exist that provides timely and effective information sharing.

Goal 2: A streamlined automated tracking, monitoring and reporting information process, integrated with program management planning and execution tools, will be in-place and operating.

Goal 3: A library of automated acquisition tools and information will exist and be accessible to all.

Goal 4: Training and support on AAI systems will be fully institutionalized.

As we were defining our goals, we met with representatives from various groups involved in setting requirements and building automated systems designed to support acquisition managers. Following our discovery process, we began development of a plan of action to realize our goals.

The Deskbook, as envisioned by the AAI PAT, will be an integrated electronic desktop system for the exchange of information to support the acquisition community.

During this process, our strategy coalesced into two system or process recommendations: the creation of an Acquisition Deskbook system, and the development of an Automated Program Status Reporting system.

The Acquisition Deskbook

The Deskbook, as envisioned by the AAI PAT, will be an integrated electronic desktop system for the exchange of information to support the acquisition community. Specifically, the Deskbook will provide timely access to complete, relevant information, and will be structured to advance managerial discretion. Its concepts incorporate dramatic changes, not only in the means by which acquisition professionals receive reference information to make informed decisions, but in changes to the way we view business decision options.

By nurturing these changes in the Deskbook concept, we anticipate the capability to provide acquisition professionals with current and complete information at their fingertips, presented in a configuration corresponding to thinking processes. To reach a large and diversified audience of acquisition professionals, the Deskbook will be an integrated software application that can be used as a stand-alone installation, on a network, or accessed remotely via the Internet, World-Wide-Web, or dial-up modem.

Overall, the Deskbook concept will use available technology to encourage new ways of managing acquisition business. Its opportunities are far-reaching and will directly impact several acquisition management areas: improve access to current direction and alternative practices; enhance decision making; facilitate communication horizontally and vertically across the acquisition community; and reduce cost of publishing acquisition directives. The initial release of the Deskbook phase could be as early as December 1995.

Ultimately, the AAI PAT expects the Deskbook, as envisioned by Dr. Kaminski, to indeed "change the way we conduct business within the DoD." Integral to the composition of the Deskbook are three separate, integrated components that address unique information needs of the acquisition community: the Reference Set, the Tool Catalog, and the Acquisition Management Forum (AM Forum).

It's "THUMBS UP" for the Acquisition Deskbook following a Decision Brief on 17 April 1995. According to Dr. Paul G. Kaminski, Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition and Technology), "With successful implementation, acquisition reform should change the way we conduct business within DoD." The Acquisition Deskbook, as designed, will be an enabling technology for a new way of doing business in the area of Automated Acquisition Information. From left: Lt. Col. Chris Feudo, USA, DSMC; Honorable Colleen Preston, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform); Honorable Paul G. Kaminski, Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition and Technology); Honorable R. Noel Longuemare, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition and Technology); and Ms. Frances M. Valore, DSMC.

The Reference Set

The critical component of the Deskbook is the Reference Set — a structured set of information that provides all applicable mandatory and discretionary information relating to acquisition within the Department of Defense, including Service, Agency, and buying activity-specific information.

Reengineering the Information. The Reference Set will provide the technological tool to support a basic change in the acquisition culture. "Our acquisition reform implementation efforts will be focused upon modifying traditional individual and organizational behaviors. We are shifting from an environment of regulation and enforcement to one of incentivized performance. To make the system truly responsive, we must "un-learn" some of the accumulated collective behaviors we have "learned" over the years. My goal is to create a climate of reasoned, well informed risk-taking by our program executive officers and system program directors.

With successful implementation, acquisition reform should change the way we conduct business within the Department. We are moving away from a pattern of hierarchical decision making to a process where decisions are made across organizational structures by integrated product teams. It means we are breaking down institutional barriers. It also means that our senior acquisition staffs are in a re-ceive mode — not just a transmit mode. The objective is to be receptive to ideas from the field to obtain buy-in and lasting change. I expect to see more use of "pilot-like" mechanisms as agents of change. There is lots of flexibility in the 5000-series directives. The issue is to incentivize change away from a "one-size-fits-all" classical mold."[2]

The PAT believes a major step in changing the acquisition culture can be achieved by carefully restructuring our acquisition information contained in today's directives, instructions and regulations. By restructuring the instructions senior management sends to the workforce, we can facilitate a cultural transition from risk avoidance through rigid conformity to regulations, to a climate that promotes the reasoned use of judgment and well informed risk-taking. After careful consideration, the team recommended acquisition information be organized in the Reference Set in the following three categories:

• **Guiding Principles**: These are the true tenets that guide our acquisition process and our mandatory op-

erating procedures. This information describes the products and processes the acquisition community *must* produce and follow.

- **Institutionalized Knowledge**: This is the bulk of our accumulated knowledge; it represents alternative practices that have been used before and may be used again. This information describes the products and processes the acquisition community *may* choose to produce and follow.

- **Sage Information**: This set of information describes advice from functional experts, lessons learned from past experience, and results and status from ongoing "pilot" efforts.

By organizing the Reference Set information into these categories, the Deskbook will send a clear message that the use of discretion and judgment are mainstream elements of our business process. Our rule-book should not be interpreted as a rigid tome that must be followed, but instead should be used as a guide to assist our acquisition mangers exercise their judgment. The process of revising the 5000 principal acquisition documents — DoDD 5000.1, DoDI 5000.2 and DoDI 5000.2M — for inclusion in the Reference Set has already begun by a select team assembled from OSD and the Services.

To assure the unique needs of each Service and Defense Agency are addressed, the information to be included in the Reference Set will be further sub-divided into three Classes:

Class 1: DoD-wide: This class applies throughout the Department of Defense. The Defense Acquisition Executive (DAE) will establish a process to certify, categorize and approve the information to be included in this class. The ongoing revision to the principal 5000-series documents is the initial step toward the development of this process.

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Class 2: Service/Agency-wide: This class applies throughout the applicable Service or Agency (e.g., U.S. Air Force, Defense Logistics Agency, Special Operations Command). The SAE or Agency senior acquisition official will establish a process to certify, categorize and approve the information to be included in this class.

Class 3: Buying-activity Specific: This class applies throughout the applicable buying activity (e.g., Electronic Systems Center [ESC], Naval Air Systems Command [NAVAIR], Tank Automotive and Armaments Command [TACOM]). The buying activity's senior acquisition official will establish a process to certify, categorize and approve the information to be included in this class.

Developing the Information Process. The Deskbook can be envisioned as a living tree trunk that encompasses the combined knowledge of the acquisition community. Up through the roots flow the nutrients (practical experience) from the Services and Agencies in the form of local operating instructions and lessons learned. The leaves absorb the sunlight (senior management direction) from OSD, the Administration, and Congress in the form of guidance and fundamental principles. In the center, the information comes together in the
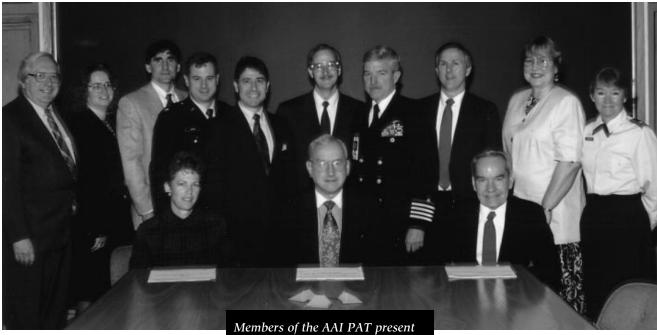
ACQUISITION MANAGERS BENEFIT FROM REINVENTING GOVERNMENT (REGO)

Numerous official and unofficial studies and reports have documented that acquisition managers need valid, accurate and timely information to avoid "surprises," often in the form of unexpected project cost increases and schedule slippages. Historically, the bureaucratic response was to develop a new "rule" to prevent that specific reoccurrence. Unfortunately, these rules are perceived as inviolate and inflexible and, as such, become a substitute for thoughtful judgment and decisive action.

Managerial expertise and judgment have always been, and continue to be, critical to successful program management. In the politically charged defense arena, this is especially true. No amount of organized, systematic "checklists" can substitute for the valuable art of decision making based on cumulative management expertise, thoughtful analysis of a situation, and finally, the courage to make a judgment call in a risk-filled environment.

The current environment, within which REGO (REinventing GOvernment) is encouraged at the highest levels, brings opportunities to re-insert a heightened awareness of the managerial discretion available to government careerists. Accordingly, the AAI PAT structured the information flow processes in ways that promote this awareness and enable acquisition professionals to make informed decisions. Toward this end, our team directed considerable attention to the organization of Deskbook information so that users could more easily distinguish between that which is Public Law or Directive, and that which is Discretionary.

Yes, the technology exists *today* to place current policy, guidance and automated tools for program management at the fingertips of every acquisition professional. Thus, the Reinventing Government philosophy, coupled with available and emerging technology, offers chances to make *real* and *enduring* differences. The political and economic climate encourages, if not forces, creative solutions while the Department braves significant redefinition of its roles.

Members of the AAI PAT present their final report to OSD's senior acquisition officials. From left: Herman Tarnow, HQ AMC; Leslye Hughes, DISA; Neil Nelson, SARDA; Lt. Col. Dave London, USAF, AFAM PO; Lt. Col. Chris Feudo, USA, DSMC; Cray Henry, DUSD(AR); Capt. Tom Davis, USN, PAT Leader — NAVAIR PMA-250; Robert Leach, DUSD(A&T)-API/PM; Frances Valore, DSMC; Col. (Sel.) Pat Bayless, USAF, DCMC. Seated from left: Honorable Colleen Preston, DUSD(AR); Honorable Paul G. Kaminski, USD(A&T); Honorable R. Noel Longuemare, Principal DUSD(A&T). (Members of the AAI PAT not pictured are Col. Mike Ferrell, USAF, AFAM PO; Capt. Mark Wessman, USN, NAVSEA 04.)

Reference Set. Like a tree, a set of processes are needed to control the flow of nutrients and energy. The Reference Set requires one set of processes to identify, collect and certify the information, and another set of processes to manage the development and operation of the Reference Set tool. The AAI PAT recommended that each Acquisition executive establish an identification, collection and certification process and identify a full time Deskbook information coordinator. The AAI PAT also recommended the establishment of a Joint Program office.

The Joint Functional Team. The information collection and certification processes offer opportunities for a "Joint" look across all Services and Agencies, to review other Components' Guiding Principles and Institutional Knowledge for potential application across all the Components. Accordingly, the Reference Set Information Coordinators from each of the Component review boards will form a JFT. Specifically, this Team will coordinate potential joint Guiding Principles and Institutional Knowledge, and present their recommendations to a Joint Service Review Board for endorsement across the Components.

The JFT will work with the Deskbook Joint Program Office (JPO) to establish the "views" into the information. Because the Deskbook will contain a tremendous quantity of data, the available methods for the acquisition workforce to view that information are critical. Only if the information is readily accessible will the Deskbook become the reference source of choice for the acquisition workforce.

In addition, the JFT will approve requirements and perform oversight functions for the DoD Acquisition Deskbook. While sufficiently recognizing the importance of maintaining Service/Agency-unique requirements, the JFT management structure simultaneously ensures a DoD-wide vision for automated acquisition information. Each AE will be responsible for establishing internal processes to identify and approve information for incorporation into the Deskbook. Of particular importance is the need to assure the validity of the information. Different process requirements are applicable to each category of information. The process action team recommended the following process guidelines:

• The **Guiding Principles** information has the greatest effect on the practice of acquisition, and the certification process should have high-level review and coordination. However, information in this category should change infrequently. The relevant AE is the appropriate certification official.

• The **Institutionalized Knowledge** category provides approved alter-

native practices. Certification should be delegated to appropriate process owners within the Component or Department.

- The **Sage Information** category collects and promulgates promising ideas, lessons learned and advice throughout the Department. The certification process should be delegated to the lowest possible level. A lengthy and top-heavy review process for the Sage Information category would be counter-productive.

To ensure the Deskbook maintains a DoD perspective, the JFT will be chartered to recommend DAE approval of alternative practices and "good ideas" that cross Component lines. Also, they will be explicitly tasked to seek out those practices and policies introduced at the Component level that may be appropriate for Joint implementation. Members will represent their respective Components on the JFT, and serve as their Component's advocate for the Deskbook. As such, members will be drawn from the ranks of senior-level representatives (O-6 or GM-15), assigned from each of the following organizations:

- Director, Acquisition Program Integration — Chairperson
- Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform)
- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- Marine Corps
- Defense Logistics Agency
- Special Operations Command
- Deskbook Program Manager — Technical Consultant
- Defense Systems Management College, Executive Secretariat and Host

Deskbook Joint Program Office. To develop and operate the Reference Set, the Process Action Team recommended the establishment of a Deskbook JPO, taking advantage of the existing AFAM program office infrastructure and experience. The Deskbook JPO will manage the overall Deskbook System — the Reference Set, Tool Catalog and AM Forum. The Deskbook program office will be formed around the existing AFAM program office, supplemented with support from the Army and Navy. The program manager will rotate through the Services every 3 years.

The Tool Catalog

The Tool Catalog is a database of software acquisition tools, currently available or under development, describing the functional capability, systems compatibility, and a point of contact for each individual tool. Its purpose is to provide a central library and referral service on automated tools for acquisition managers.

What drives the need for the Tool Catalog? In today's environment, acquisition managers are isolated. This isolation creates multiple small markets where it is often easier and faster to develop specialized automated tools rather than investigate the availability of existing tools in other isolated markets.

Today's environment leads to widespread proliferation and duplication. As currently structured, the process begins with identification of a need for a particular software tool by a single acquisition manager or a small group of managers. They then develop the needed tool, or an enterprising commercial company sells them a specialized existing tool. This process is repeated in isolation throughout the acquisition community. Because individual acquisition managers do not have the information available to determine whether a software tool already exists, duplication in development proliferates. The Tool Catalog is intended to reduce such duplication by providing the following specific information to acquisition managers:

- tool functional classification;
- functional description;
- assessment of capability;
- software and hardware compatibility;

- implementation/support cost;
- identification of current users;
- tool owner and acquisition source;
- contract vehicles, if any; and
- date of last upgrade.

Acquisition tools will be classified functionally in the following categories to better serve the acquisition community:

- industrial/manufacturing/quality assurance;
- reference;
- program management;
- financial management;
- contract management;
- engineering;
- configuration control;
- test and evaluation;
- logistics;
- foreign military sales;
- safety;
- security;
- environmental;
- installation management;
- construction management;
- human systems integration; and
- others, when identified.

In addition to the cataloging function, as users consult the Tool Catalog service, the Deskbook will collect trend information on the automated tool needs of acquisition managers. This information can then be analyzed and provided to the senior management in support of funding requests to develop or enhance needed automated tools. The Process Action Team recommended NAVAIR PMA-250 manage the Tool Catalog.

The Acquisition Management Forum

The AM Forum is an unstructured and informal electronic information exchange to facilitate the rapid flow of good ideas and information throughout the acquisition community. As envisioned by the AAI PAT, the Forum will give acquisition professionals an electronic "one-stop communications center" that provides quick and easy access to other Acquisition professionals. As a means of exchanging

information, the Forum offers timely, informal advice, ideas and consultation, and could foster teaming opportunities with others working on similar projects, questions, concerns or initiatives.

The AM Forum organizational functions will include information collecting, screening, directing and disseminating, but will not include certification or approval functions. Our team believes the key to leading a Forum that people want to use, has more to do with the people and the information they find there than with sophisticated graphics or quick connections. The intent is not to see warm, fuzzy, sanitized and approved information, but rather to encourage open discussion, a gloves-off exchange of ideas, and rapid communication among multiple DoD community users. To reach the largest possible audience of acquisition professionals, the AM Forum will be available via Internet, telefax and telephone message 24 hours a day, and staffed during normal duty hours.

The DSMC will establish and manage the AM Forum and use the Forum to support the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) in the planning and distribution of publicity and training to support the Deskbook system. The following items (by no means all-inclusive) suggest the content of a typical Forum:

- pilot programs status;
- acquisition reform initiatives;
- new ideas, proposed alternative practices;
- distance learning applications;
- open discussion and feedback;
- notices — course offerings, conferences, seminars; and
- new or emerging policy.

An AM Forum central focal point will facilitate the exchange of top-down, bottom-up and horizontal information that is consistent, valid, accurate and timely. External interface and coordination will consist of

legislation, executive actions or hot news, while internal interface and coordination will originate from OSD, the Services and Agencies. The AM Forum will coordinate and facilitate several types of information: survey findings; concerns and current issues; expert functional responses to queries; real-time status of pending legislation; Planning, Programming and Budgeting System updates (committee mark-ups, etc.); and other items of interest, as indicated by users/customers.

Training And Education

The DAU will coordinate the training and education requirements to ensure the Deskbook concept is institutionalized. The projected target date for full integration of the Deskbook into the applicable DAU consortium curriculum is Mar 96.

The DAU, upon determination of need for new courses or additions to existing courses, will coordinate the development of all training and education functions for the Deskbook, targeting applicable courses at all levels. The core competencies for Deskbook instruction should include an appropriate emphasis on the underlying philosophy of the Deskbook as an enabling technology to disseminate information on a "new way of doing business."

The Defense Acquisition Corps Functional Boards will determine the need to develop new competencies or revise their respective functional competencies accordingly. As necessary, the Boards will also task the DAU to develop or revise applicable course curricula.

The Automated Program Status Reporting (APSR) System

The overall acquisition information process will take advantage of emerging technology, to further an evolving acquisition culture of good business practices. Thus, as a team we ad-

dressed Goal No. 2 in response to Dr. Kaminski's direction — a streamlined automated tracking, monitoring and reporting information process, integrated with program management planning and execution tools, in-place and operating.

The AAI PAT recommended the development of an APSR System to automate the continuous process of evaluating program execution between decision points. As a first step, we recommended that a critical action team be chartered with the express purpose of defining the information required for oversight and to develop a corresponding data dictionary. The critical element in developing and automating a new oversight process is the agreement on what information is needed to maintain program insight balanced with the cost of providing that information.

Current methods of oversight reporting tend to require the creation of information purely for the purpose of reporting. The APSR approach should maximize the use of existing information used to manage programs rather than require the generation of new oversight-specific information. The resulting data dictionary documenting the information agreement could then be used as the foundation for development of a distributed database supporting the information needs of our senior decision makers and our integrated product teams. Ultimately, this system should replace other forms of oversight reporting, and provide timely and accurate information, while reducing costs associated with duplicated program management efforts.

The AAI PAT recommended the Army be appointed the EA to establish and manage the development of the APSR system, and coordinate appropriate APSR actions with the Systems Acquisition Management Corporate Information Management (SAM-CIM) effort to achieve consistency and efficiencies.

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On a Personal Note

The Deskbook product and associated services was a mission motivated by an important vision. The AAI PAT members were driven to achieve our goals, because it mattered to each of us, albeit in a variety of ways.

Don't consider the job finished now that the PAT has completed its initial mission — to define a vision and develop a roadmap. Each of us on the "global team" has a vested interest in some part or all of these goals and objectives. The PAT achieved hard-won alliances on issues that mattered most, and a workable consensus on others. Along the way, we bought into the process that brought about the commitment. We will take with us this process of sharing that creates enthusiasm to enhance our futures. We found ways to successfully bridge differences and truly bring the best of each choice into a product. The product is a "beginning" we will all expand to make a difference in our fields.

Although new ideas are often resisted, passions for specific ideas, principles, people or things reside within us all. In the quest to define the vision, goals and objectives for DoD's automated acquisition information future, each member of the team worked to construct a process within which individual passions could thrive. The vision and roadmap, and resultant products will indeed incorporate these ideas, and are designed to seek new "shake-up" ideas.

We are destined to find new ways to conduct our business Defense-wide and globally. The team and its dynamics are representative of DoD's diversity of backgrounds and interests. It proved to be an encouraging testing ground for paradigm change. Laboriously, even sometimes painfully, we achieved milestones — not closure — on the first phase of the vision and roadmap.

New ways of thinking won't show up in the mirror one morning. True measures of success are difficult to define — and to achieve, which is why they are so valued. The Deskbook itself is an idea. How good the idea is depends upon how we use it. The concept is much more than is immediately evident. It is an excellent beginning to push us to expand beyond our most rigid boundaries.

Endnotes

1. At press time, a Memorandum of Agreement is in coordination among the Service Acquisition Executives detailing the funding and staffing commitments of each Service to the Deskbook, and the Systems Acquisition Management Corporate Information Management (SAM CIM) effort is being restructured to implement the APSR recommendation.
2. Honorable Paul G. Kaminski, Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology), "The Defense Acquisition Challenge: Technological Supremacy at an Affordable Cost," in a speech presented to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, January 27, 1995.